

In the claims:

1 – 16 (canceled)

17. (previously presented) A method for fabricating a leadframe comprising the steps of:

providing a copper leadframe having a mount pad for an integrated circuit chip and a plurality of lead segments having their first end near said mount pad and their second end remote from said mount pad;

cleaning said leadframe in alkaline soak cleaning and alkaline electrocleaning;

activating said leadframe by immersing said leadframe into an acid solution, thereby dissolving any copper oxide;

immersing said leadframe into an electrolytic nickel plating solution and depositing a first layer of nickel onto said copper;

electroplating a layer comprising an alloy of nickel and palladium;

electroplating a second layer of nickel, thereby adapting said lead segments for mechanical bending;

electroplating a layer of palladium;

selectively masking said chip pad and said first segment ends, thereby leaving said second segment ends exposed; and

plating a layer of gold on said exposed segment ends in a thickness suitable to optimize solder attachment, thereby creating a visual distinction between the gold-plated and unplated leadframe areas.

18. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 17 wherein said gold plating is performed electrolytically or electrolessly.

19. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 17 wherein said masked parts of said leadframe comprise the leadframe areas to be encapsulated by molding compound.

20 (previously presented). The method according to Claim 17 wherein the process steps are executed in sequence without time delays, yet including intermediate rinsing steps.

21 (previously presented) The method according to Claim 17 wherein said acid solution may be sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid or any other acid.

22. (previously presented) A method for fabricating a leadframe comprising the steps of providing a copper leadframe having a mount pad for an integrated circuit chip and a plurality of lead segments having their first end near said mount pad and their second end remote from said mount pad,

cleaning said leadframe in alkaline soak cleaning and alkaline electrocleaning;

activating said leadframe by immersing said leadframe into an acid solution, thereby dissolving any copper oxide;

electroplating a layer of nickel, thereby adapting said lead segments for mechanical bending;

electroplating a layer of palladium;

selectively masking said chip pad and said first segment ends, thereby leaving said second segment ends exposed; and

plating a layer of gold on said exposed segment ends in a thickness suitable to optimize solder attachment, thereby creating a visual distinction between the gold-plated and unplated leadframe areas.